



Mayor Joyce Craig

2023 State of the City Address

Good afternoon,

I want to start by thanking Heather and everyone at the Chamber, as well as Neil and the New Hampshire Institute of Politics for hosting this event – and as always, thank you Scott for moderating.

I'd also like to thank Bellwether Community Credit Union for being the presenting sponsor of today's event.

And I'd like to recognize my parents, Jan and Tom Hopkins and my husband Mike who are here today.

It's bittersweet to think that I'm delivering my final State of the City address as Mayor of Manchester.

As a fourth-generation resident, serving as the Mayor of Manchester has been one of the greatest honors of my life. I'm proud of everything we've accomplished and I'm excited for the future of our city.

Back in 2017, I ran for Mayor to get Manchester back on track. Today, I can confidently say that our city is heading in the right direction.

During my time as Mayor, we attracted hundreds of millions of dollars in economic development initiatives, invested in public safety and public education, repaired an unprecedented number of previously neglected roads, and supported the creation of over 2,000 housing units. We confronted our challenges head on – demanding more accountability from the state, and working with other Mayors to find solutions to issues in our communities.

Public education is what drove me to first run for public office. I had three young children, and as a parent, saw that our schools were struggling. As Mayor, I've prioritized public education. We've decreased class sizes, expanded higher-level learning opportunities to all students, and ensured that every student has access to technology. And for the first time in decades, we implemented a district-wide curriculum for reading, math, science, and social studies.

While we still have a great deal of work to do, the Manchester School District finally has a strategic plan, and vision for the future, thanks in large part to Manchester Proud, a group of business and community leaders who believe, as I do, that strong schools lead to a thriving community that offers better jobs a strengthened tax base, safer neighborhoods, and enhanced property values.

I believe our educators are our district's greatest strength. When I first took office, we had a hard time attracting teachers. We've since raised wages to be competitive with surrounding districts, and, as a result, have reduced the number of open teaching positions to the lowest it's been in recent years. We also raised the minimum wage for all of our district staff, including our valued paraprofessionals, and are offering more professional development opportunities than ever before.

In last year's State of the City, I announced The Manchester Promise, a program in partnership with Southern New Hampshire University, Duet, and Manchester Community College, which allows Manchester public school students who normally wouldn't have the opportunity to attend college, to do so debt free. The program's first cohort includes 25 students – 11 are from Central, 8 from West, 3 from Memorial, and 3 from Manchester School of Technology. Twenty two of these students are first-generation college students and 7 are first-generation Americans.

I'm proud to say the entire cohort is doing well – they're actually outperforming the overall freshman class by almost a full grade point.

Over the last five years, we've faced issues in our community head-on, demanded more accountability from the State and collaborated with residents, businesses, non-profits, and the faith-based community to implement evidence-based solutions to our challenges.

Public safety has always been our top priority, and together, we've made Manchester a safer city. Since I took office in 2018, overall crime has fallen by 12% and violent crime by 38%. My budgets funded the largest police complement ever, adding over 30 new officers. We increased the number of required annual training hours focusing on de-escalation, use of non-lethal force, implicit bias, and cultural responsiveness. And we invested in technology, including gun-shot recognition software, integrated video software, and Manchester was the first community in New Hampshire to utilize body cameras.

And we are determined to reduce violent crime. We've increased foot patrols, implemented a gun violence prevention strategy, and enacted environmental improvements to reduce crime.

There's a statewide housing shortage, which is contributing to an increase in homelessness across New Hampshire.

Earlier this year, eight New Hampshire Mayors – from Berlin to Nashua, Claremont to Dover, joined me in urging the Department of Health and Human Services and the Governor to increase emergency shelter beds across the state, and add medical respite beds, so that individuals who are experiencing homelessness have a place to recover after time in the hospital. We also requested transparency on the use of state funds to address homelessness and substance use disorder in our local communities.

Manchester, once again, is leading the way. With fatality prevention in mind, we stood up three emergency shelters this winter thanks to the hard work of the Fire Department. This included the first city-run emergency winter shelter in the state, and a women's shelter run by the YWCA in a state-owned building. The Fire Department with Squad 1 continues to do outreach, we added a Healthcare for the

Homeless mobile van to increase outreach services, and created a Department of Housing Stability to coordinate efforts with our nonprofits and business partners.

And we're engaging national experts to ensure we're approaching this issue in the most effective way possible. Starting next month, we'll be partnering with the National Alliance to End Homelessness to analyze our current systems and supports, identify where our gaps in services are, and make recommendations on how we can improve.

Covid-19 showed us how important it is to ensure the overall health of our community. So we've added neighborhood-based Community Health Workers to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents, like our seniors and new Americans. We've established the Manchester Healthy Eating Active Living program – a healthy corner store initiative to increase healthy food access to our historically disadvantaged neighborhoods. And established Project Launch, newborn baby home visits, to help new mothers provide the best care to their babies.

Manchester has been selected as one of just five cities to participate in the National League of Cities 'Cities of Opportunity Action Cohort'. This 15-month intensive technical assistance program will focus on expanding health equity, to ensure that our residents have access to the same opportunities, no matter what neighborhood they live in.

And we're tackling substance use disorder with a new Director of Overdose Prevention, increased access to treatment facilities for individuals experiencing both homelessness and substance use disorder, and a nationally-recognized overdose strike team that targets hotspot areas when spikes occur.

Manchester's economy is thriving due to our work in recruiting private investment and securing federal grants.

Earlier this week, The Wall Street Journal named Manchester 10th out of 326 cities with the hottest job market in the country for small metropolitan areas, based on our low unemployment rates and high wages, but this is only the beginning.

In September, the City of Manchester was one of 21 winners of the Economic Development Administration's Build Back Better Regional Challenge. This was the largest federal economic development challenge in decades, and awards went to regions that put forward transformative plans to revitalize local industries. Manchester, along with our higher education and industry partners, was awarded \$44 million to advance the biofabrication industry. This funding, along with an additional \$12 million in industry match, will create over 7,000 new jobs over the next 7 years, and make our region a leader in this emerging high-tech field.

The Manchester-Boston Regional Airport continues to be a driver of jobs and tourism here in Manchester and throughout the state. We welcomed Spirit Airlines, the first new airline in seventeen years, Amazon Air service, doubling our cargo space and adding hundreds of new jobs, and most recently Avelo Airlines with nonstop service to Raleigh, North Carolina.

Manchester has the hottest housing market in the country, and we're working hard to meet the demand. There are over 2,000 new units in development across the city, including 500 new affordable units.

We allocated over \$10 million to Manchester's Affordable Housing Trust Fund to support these projects. We established the Manchester Housing Commission to make recommendations to increase affordable housing options in the city, and we're performing a comprehensive rewrite of our zoning ordinances to support the development of additional housing.

We made unprecedented investments in our aging public infrastructure. During my time as Mayor, we've repaired 215 miles of roads and sidewalks, which accounts for over 50% of all roads in the City of Manchester. We won a \$25 million federal RAISE Grant to transform the South Commercial and South Elm street area. This massive infrastructure investment will make our community safer for pedestrians, bikers, and vehicles, better connect the Millyard and downtown with South Elm and South Willow Streets, and my favorite part, it adds a pedestrian bridge over Granite Street. The project is currently in the design phase, and construction will begin in 2024.

We're expanding public transportation to better meet the needs of our community. We doubled the number of buses on the city's two most popular routes, and we'll soon add an intercity bus that will run five times per day, taking people from downtown to the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport as well as the Park and Rides on I-93. And in my latest budget, I included a local match for a new multimodal transportation center, to serve over 200,000 MTA passengers with a well-lit and secure space, protected from the elements, with basic amenities like bathrooms and seating, as well as a community meeting space.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to serve this great city, and to work with all of our hardworking department heads and city and school district employees. I'm also grateful for the support of our business community and residents. The state of the city is strong because of this community's ability to come together, take on tough fights, and create positive change.

Being mayor of my hometown is the best job I've ever had. I will always be Manchester's biggest supporter and I look forward to accomplishing even more during the remainder of my time as mayor and beyond.

Thank you.